

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
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O R 211315Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7712
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USLO RIYADH
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2266

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, APRIL 21, 1300 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 2217 (DTG 191313Z APR 78)

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE HOSS CABINET OF "TECHNOCRATS"
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RESIGNED APRIL 19. ALMOST EVERYONE AGREES THE NEW
CABINET WILL BE "POLITICAL." DEPUTIES OF ALL POLITICAL
PERSUASIONS MET TO DRAW UP A DOCUMENT OUTLINING OPTIONS
FOR THE COUNTRY AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE CEASE-FIRES
IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH AND SOUTH LEBANON CONTINUE TO HOLD
GENERALLY. DISSIDENT LEBANESE ARAB ARMY ELEMENTS
AND PALESTINIANS REPORTEDLY DROVE LEBANESE SOLDIERS OUT

OF NABATIYAH BARRACKS. END SUMMARY.

2. NEW CABINET.

THE CABINET OF PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS RESIGNED ON APRIL 19 (SEPTELS). ALMOST EVERYONE AGREES THE NEW CABINET WILL BE "POLITICAL." THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IKE ON APRIL 21 CITED A "MINISTERIAL SOURCE" AS SAYING "IT WAS ALMOST CERTAIN" THAT SALIM AL-HOSS WOULD BE RE-APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER, AND THIS VIEW IS WIDELY SHARED IN POLITICAL CIRCLES, ALTHOUGH A GOOD NUMBER OF DEPUTIES REPORTEDLY FAVOR SA'EB SALAAM.

3. DEPUTIES MEET, DISCUSS RECONCILIATION.

SPEAKER KAMAL AL ASSAD IS PURSUING HIS EFFORTS TOWARDS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. ON APRIL 20 HE CONVOKED A MEETING AT VILLA MANSOUR OF DEPUTIES OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS, INCLUDING CAMILLE CHAMOUN, PIERRE GEMAYEL, SA'EB SALAAM, BAHIGE TAKIEDDINE, NASRI MALOUF, KHATCHIG BABIKIAN, AUGUSTE BAKHOS, HASSAN RIFAI, KAZIM AL-KHALIL AND RASHID SOLH. THE DEPUTIES ARE TO MEET AGAIN ON APRIL 21 AND DRAW UP A DRAFT DOCUMENT OUTLINING THE UNDAMENTAL OPTIONS THAT THE COUNTRY MUST FOLLOW.

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4. SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT.

A. THE CEASE-FIRE IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH/SHIAH CONTINUES TO HOLD GENERALLY. ARMED CHRISTIAN MILITIA REMAIN ON THE STREETS IN EAST BEIRUT.

B. DURING THE DAY LIFE THROUGHOUT THE CITY APPEARS NORMAL, ALTHOUGH SCHOOLS IN EAST BEIRUT ARE CLOSED. AT NIGHT THERE IS SPORADIC SHOOTING AND EXPLOSIONS, MUCH OF IT CRIMINAL RATHER THAN POLITICAL. ON APRIL 19 ARMED GUARDS FIRED ON MEN TRYING TO STEAL CARS FROM IN FRONT OF THE AL GHAWAI AND DANA BUILDINGS IN RAS BEIRUT, WHERE SEVERAL AMERICAN EMBASSY EMPLOYEES HAVE APARTMENTS. AT ABOUT 0230 HOURS LOCAL ON APRIL 20 A LARGE BOMB WAS SET OFF NEXT TO THE DODGE DEALERSHIP ON THE COAST ROAD IN RAS BEIRUT, ALSO CLOSE TO SEVERAL EMBASSY APARTMENTS.

5. UNIFIL BUILDUP CONTINUES; MINOR INCIDENTS.

THE CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON CONTINUES TO HOLD, ALTHOUGH RELIABLE SOURCES HERE TELL US THAT MINOR

SHOOTING INCIDENTS INVOLVING UNIFIL OCCUR ALMOST DAILY.
ON APRIL 19, 380 ADDITIONAL FRENCH SOLDIERS WERE FLOWN
INTO BEIRUT, BRINGING TOTAL STRENGTH OF FRENCH CONTINGENT
UP TO ABOUT 1,100. A FRENCH SHIP DOCKED AT BEIRUT PORT
AND UNLOADED ABOUT 130 VEHICLES AND OTHER MATERIAL FOR
THE FRENCH CONTINGENT.

6. REBEL SOLDIERS TAKE BARRACKS.

A. ON APRIL 19, ACCORDING TO PRESS AND DATT SOURCES,
LEBANESE ARAB ARMY (LAA) SOLDIERS, LED BY LAA OFFICER
MOHAMMED SALIM, ALONG WITH PALESTINIAN GUERILLAS, ATTACKED
AND TOOK OVER THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF) BARRACKS
IN NABATIYAH.
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B. A SMALL LAF CONTINGENT HAD BEEN SENT TO THE
BARRACKS ABOUT SIX WEEKS AGO TO REESTABLISH A PRESENCE
IN NABATIYAH. THIS SMALL CONTINGENT ALONG WITH LAA
TROOPS ALREADY IN THE BARRACKS HAD HAD SEVERAL INCIDENTS
WITH PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE LEFTISTS. ON APRIL 19
THE LAF CONTINGENT SET UP A ROADBLOCK AT HABBUSH
BETWEEN NABATIYAH AND ZAHRANI, AND ATTEMPTED TO
ARREST SOME PALESTINIANS WHICH PRECIPITATED THE
APRIL 19 ATTACK ON THE BARRACKS, ACCORDING TO DATT AND
OTHER SOURCES. THE FIGHTING WAS NOT SERIOUS AND THE
LOYAL TROOPS WENT TO SIDON WITHOUT CASUALTIES.
PARKER

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